

Feature Packed

This issue Pioneer's new 6.1 home theatre receiver opens a whole new kettle of fish in the *Empire* office.

PIONEER VSX-D810S MULTI-CHANNEL RECEIVER

MACHINE SPECS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Price | \$1199 |
| Supplied by | Pioneer Australia |
| Dimensions | 420 x 158 x 401mm |
| Features | 6.1 surround sound (120 Watts per channel), AM/FM receiver, Midnight Listening mode, dual DSPs. |
| Outputs/inputs | S-Video inputs, DVD 7.1 CH inputs, digital optical inputs and outputs and coaxial, RCA inputs. |

As was probably predictable, 5.1 surround was only going to remain the standard for a limited time, and with the advent of new 7.1 systems, the decision to buy a home theatre surround sound

system has become more mind-boggling. Just to add a bit more confusion to the process, Pioneer's new VSX-D810S is a 6.1 home theatre receiver.

The 6.1 system follows a similar set-up to 5.1 (one centre, two front, two rear and a sub woofer) but adds a centre rear speaker, which in a sense, fills in a gap in the surround set-up, encircling the listener with sound. While many of you may be wondering whether this makes a whole load of difference, it actually does. With traditional 5.1, sound that revolves around the listener (like the 360° explosion that begins *Swordfish*) stops dead when it reaches one side of the

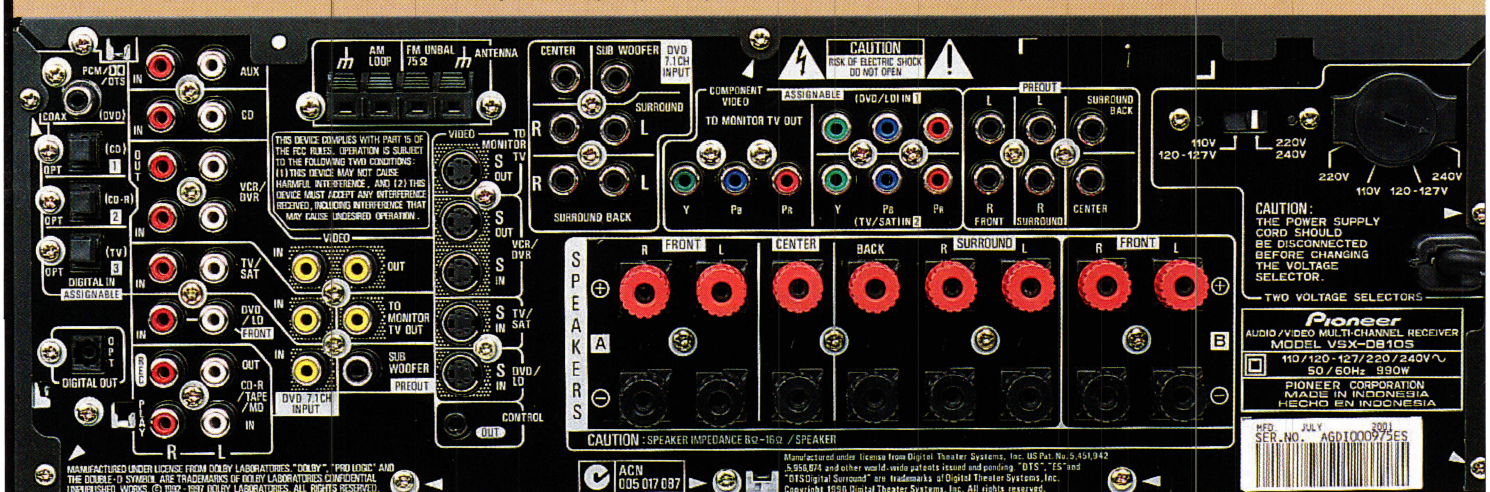
surround sound, then picks up again a split second later as it hits the other. What 6.1 does is allow a closer approximation of the cinematic experience, by filling a gap in the room. Whether or not you feel that 5.1 lets you down enough to make an upgrade necessary, is up to you though.

The VSX-D810S looks big and beefy, and it's features back up its impressive looks. With a punchy 120 Watts per channel, it's definitely loud enough to kick some neighbour-arse, and there are enough inputs on the back to plug in Bing Lee's whole



ROUND THE BACK

All the outputs and inputs you may need, but can't see in the shop display cabinet.



...a new-generation receiver with more features than you could ask for.

summer stock-take. You can use this unit as a central sound hub to control the sound from a DVD player, a video player, CD player, Mini-Disc, games console or anything else you can manage to plug into one of its many and varied inputs.

Its many features include dual DSP (digital signal processors) that you can choose between, power saving standby modes and an easy to use mode selector. The many modes available include dts, Dolby Digital and the ability to tailor modes to the type of film you are watching. For example, if you're watching a drama, you can select the drama mode and the dialogue will be accented, likewise with action, the surround effects will be pumped up a little. The Midnight Listening mode allows you to listen at low volumes, while not having a lack of

Remain seated!

So how does the remote shape up?

For a unit with this many features, the VSX-D810S's remote is remarkably free of clutter. Having the equivalent of an option key on a computer keyboard helps free up room on the remote, as it has allowed the makers to double up commands on the one key. The layout is also a pleasure to use, with plenty of space around the directional toggle (so as to avoid hitting other buttons). This remote is able to learn commands from other units in your set-up, which is handy in cutting down on having a mass of remotes.



surround sound impact that happens at low volume.

Setting up is very easy. The speaker inputs are self explanatory, all labelled clearly. With so many inputs on the back though, you'll need to think out how you're going to gather all your cables together without creating a jungle of wire. Realistically, you can have over seven different modules attached to your receiver, not including the speakers, so you can see how things can get very messy. This is more a testament to the versatility of the unit though.

Over-all, the VSX-D810S is a fantastic new-generation of home theatre receiver, with more features than you could ask for, at an affordable price.

Matt Coyte

THE FINAL VERDICT

| | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| Simplicity | 8/10 |
| Style | 9/10 |
| Features | 9/10 |
| Volume | 9/10 |
| Sound | 8/10 |
| Value for money | 9/10 |
| Overall | 9/10 |